

(Teaching) Essayist Literacy in the Multimedia World



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Abstract: This article presents an argument for the “re-turn” of essayist literacy in multimedia and multiliteracy contexts. For its democratic, pedagogical, and intellectual potential, essayist literacy is too important to be removed from composition curriculum, but it needs to be re-imagined within a diversity of essay traditions, including the turn toward multimedia writing undertaken in diverse writing classrooms. This article analyzes the findings from a study of one such ‘re-imagined’ essayist literacy unit/assignment in a composition course designed to focus on multiliteracies at a research university in the Northeast United States.

I’m emphatically not arguing the essay as the sole or even main genre for writing instruction. I am arguing that it needs to be in the mix.
Douglas Hesse

The decline in essayist literacy has been viewed as the decline of knowledge itself.
Ron Scollon and Suzanne Scollon

Adam Banks’s chair’s address at the 2015 Conference on College Composition and Communication in Tampa, FL, triggered heated discussion on the place of “the essay” in writing curriculum. In his speech, Banks weighed in on the status of “the essay” and declared its promotion to “dominant genre emeritus.” While recognizing the value of “the essay,” Banks wanted to “acknowledge the rise and promotion of many other activities around which writing and communication can be organized” and urged writing teachers to move past this dominant genre and teach writing in its expanded sense, including “multimodal, multimedia forms of composing.”

From Twitter to listservs, writing teachers and scholars reacted to his speech, some interpreting it as a call for the field to abandon the essay, and others maintaining that Banks was just opposing a mechanical and stilted version of the academic essay, not the genre of the essay itself. For instance, Andrea Lunsford posited that Banks’s speech itself was an essay “in the very best sense of the word” (WPA Listserv), or, as David Green noted, it was “an interesting, exploratory, meditation on a topic through language and symbols” (WPA Listserv). As these scholars pointed out, Banks was not, in fact, pitching the idea of sacrificing essayist literacy in all its manifestations; his major issue was with the static five paragraph, thesis-driven, academic textual form that has potential to stifle the creative and innovative use of multiple media/modes, languages, and forms of expression in variegated forms of composing.

As Banks’s speech and the ensuing discussion illustrate, the genre of “the essay” and its place in the writing curriculum is a contentious one. Many scholars argue that essayist literacy should not be removed from composition curriculum since it is valued for its historical and current role in knowledge production, preservation, organization, and dissemination; for its flexible form, which can sponsor its writers’ and readers’ space for critical reflections and conversations with other genres and text forms; for its pragmatic function in numerous situations, ranging from the college admission process to a job search; for its humanistic and democratic values; and for its merit as the medium of inquiry, argument, or pursuit of knowledge (Badley, Hesse, Olson, Bloom, Scollon and Scollon, Heilker, Trimbur). Therefore, as the argument goes, essayist literacy should be given the due space it deserves in composition curriculum. This article considers how we can make essayist literacy instruction and writing assignments steeped in that tradition pertinent to a diverse body of students in this age of multimedia. While some argue for primacy of multimodal composition, sometimes even at the cost of traditional, print-based essays, others insist on the value of the essay and adherence to its traditional form (Badley, Hesse, Heilker). It is

within this context that this study addresses one central question: what does a multimediated essayist literacy look like in a 21st century classroom? In an attempt to explore this question critically, and extensively, I designed a research study of the writing practices of college students that explores how the form we ask students to produce can be re-imagined within diverse essay traditions, multimedia contexts, and students' multiliteracy practices.

Essayist Literacy for a Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Classroom

The typical essay form our students are being asked to produce now is far removed from the original notion of essay introduced by Michel de Montaigne and has been challenged by the plural literacy traditions our students bring to the classroom and the increasing trend of multimodal essay composition inside and outside the academy. In the Montaignean sense of the term, subjectivity, pursuit of truth, and exploration characterize an essay, as opposed to the objective and neutral tone associated with the current 'standard' academic essay. Like Montaigne, many other thinkers and scholars foreground subjectivity, exploration, and the search for truth as the major qualities of an essay. One among them is Georg Lukacs, who argues that "[T]he essay ... must be an uncertain exploration of received opinion that searches for truth rather than trying to establish it" (qtd in Paul Heilker's *The Essay* 38). Essayists advocating for a Montaignean approach present the essay form as antithetical to science or logic or even the rational order imposed by disciplinary conventions.

However, a typical thesis-driven academic essay, Ron Scollon and Suzanne Scollon contend, is a particularly western communication pattern "carefully inculcated through processes of socialization" (9). Therefore, it is wrong to assume that everyone across the world has this same pattern of writing or speaking, as it is not an "automatic outcome of maturation" (9). Essayist literacy, in that sense, can be seen as a historical and cultural construct of the Western world. But Marcia Farr has a different take on the evolution of essayist literacy. In her view, "[E]ssayist literacy may have arisen as a genre style (Olson, 1977; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Trimbур, 1990), but it currently represents a situational style because it is associated more generally with academic situations (classrooms, academic conferences, public lectures) than specifically with essay writing" (8). Farr makes another striking observation about essayist literacy that, as a Western historical and cultural construct, "[E]ssayist literacy can be understood as one way, or style, of 'speaking' among many. Here 'speaking' refers to both oral and written uses of language, as it does in Bakhtin's (1986) work on 'speech' genres" (7).

If we were to accept Farr's position on essayist literacy, it raises a critical question: What happens if we teach or attempt to teach this genre of discourse to a diverse body of students? Heilker states that through this practice we "impose strict limits upon the various discourses students bring to class—their regional, racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic jargons ... " (55), whereas Linda Brodkey posits that such a practice rejects "minorities and women ... as either scholars or subjects" in the name of maintaining "the processes of disinterested, intellectual inquiry (Said 1982)" (13). Farr herself contends that many groups of students are discriminated against as they "use spoken and written language in ways that contrast sharply with the implicit model of language use underlying much writing instruction in this country" (5). Our current model of instruction privileges some over other groups of students, continues Farr, because "[T]hose who already know and use, at least in some contexts, discourse that resembles this taught model relatively closely have less difficulty learning to produce texts that conform to it than those whose naturally acquired discourse differs from it" (5). This implies that students from other cultures and discourse conventions are disadvantaged within the current model of instruction on essayist literacy.

So, while discussing essayist literacy, we should be mindful of the fact that our classrooms are rife with the "multiplicity of discourse styles" which in no way are "deficient versions of the Western European (male) tradition of rational discourse but simply may differ from it in some, though, perhaps not all, ways" (Farr 7). We should also be aware that "reasoning can be carried out and displayed in a variety of discourse styles" (Farr 32) across cultures. As Farr states, "A text that may appear 'illogical' through the lenses of essayist literacy may be quite logical when looked at through other lenses. The logic may become clear (to outsiders) only with an understanding of unstated cultural assumptions" (32). The implication of this for our instruction is that "[S]tudents whose 'ways of speaking' may differ significantly from the ways of essayist literacy are not taught effectively by instructors who do not understand and appreciate the sociolinguistic repertoire they have brought to the classroom with them" (Farr 33). Hence, the re-imagination of this literacy form and the ways it is being taught to diverse students in composition classes is imperative.

Such a re-imagination of essayist literacy, however, entails an integration and incorporation of multimodal and multilingual literacy practices that our students regularly engage in their daily lives, and/or that regularly feature in many contemporary media platforms. Expanding the genre this way facilitates a more critical understanding of its "traditional" designation as a neutral and objective academic prose form, for it recognizes that this genre is not

necessarily a static and stilted text form, but a flexible semiotic mode capable of accommodating multiple media and discourse styles that our students bring with them to our classrooms.

Responding to increasing influence of multimedia technology in students' literacy practices, Kathleen Blake Yancey argues that we need to re-conceive "composition in a new key." According to her, such a reconceived notion of composition or writing includes print, but it also includes writing for the screen and an understanding that writing is not just textual but also visual. Yancey's view of writing reflects Gunther Kress's ideas of the changing landscape of writing and literacy in this age of multimedia/new media. Kress writes that given the "theoretical change ... from linguistics to semiotics—from a theory that accounted for language alone to a theory that can account equally well for gesture, speech, image, writing, 3D objects, colour, music and no doubt others" (35-36), the language modes, such as speech and writing should have to be "dealt with semiotically" as they constitute "a part of the whole landscape of the many modes available for representation" (36). Jodie Nicotra also speaks of the literacy landscape, but from the point of view of changes in material technologies of literacy, shedding light on the evolution of literacy and literacy technologies over time—from orality to writing, from writing to print, and from print to digital media. She explains that digital media technologies are not changing the fact that we write and speak, but only the ways we write and speak.

In following Nicotra's line of argument, it can be said that we and our students still compose, but compose with different media technologies, and this fact challenges the ways we teach our students to compose, as Steven Fraiberg notes: "composition for the twenty-first century requires a shift toward conceptualizing writers as 'knotworkers' negotiating complex arrays of languages, texts, tools, objects, symbols, and tropes" (107). Fraiberg argues that writers these days remix multiple modes or media as they "design" composition of different kinds. According to him, as the "flow of content across multiple media platforms" collides, intersects, crisscrosses, and interacts "in unpredictable ways" (Jenkins qtd. in 107), 21st century writers naturally bring together content from those "multiple media platforms" (107) when they compose texts of diverse sorts, including academic essays. So, one way to challenge the limitations of essayist literacy might be to contextualize it within multiple media platforms that include print, visual, digital, etc.

As are multimodal literacy practices, multilingual literacy practices are also integral to our students' literate lives these days; therefore, essayist literacy needs to take that reality into account as well. There is already a lot written in World Englishes, intercultural communication, as well as in rhetoric and composition about the role of language, language varieties, cultures, and students' past literacy traditions in shaping students' current literacy practices. Cynthia L. Selfe and Gail E. Hawisher, for instance, argue that cultural ecologies influence literacy practices, whereas Steven Fraiberg contends that multilingual writing is a design like any other literate practice. Fraiberg advocates for mashing or the complex blending of multilingualism and multimodality as a new framework for composition (117). In fact, multilingualism and English language varieties (World Englishes) are long held to be great semiotic resources for composition as they contribute to and increase what Selfe calls the bandwidth of semiotic resources for composition by making available all means of persuasion (Selfe, *Aurality and Multimodal Composing*). For instance, Yamuna Kachru notes that writers from Outer (countries where English is spoken as a second language) and Expanding Circles (countries where English is spoken as a foreign language) use different rhetorical organizations in writing because of "nativization of English" and "Anglicization of indigenous languages" due to increasing "contact between English and local languages" (379). Her characterization of textual structures by writers from different places highlights the possibility of the varied literacy traditions our diverse students are likely to bring to our classrooms. Our students' plural discourse structures and literacy practices ask us to re-vision our current understanding of essayist literacy and how we teach the essay genre in a globalized writing classroom, informed by multiple languages, modes of representation, and meaning making practices.

Essayist Literacy Instruction in the Multimedia Age: A Research Study

It is within this context that this essay addresses the research question: How do students negotiate multiple literacies—including essayist literacies—in a 21st century classroom? In an attempt to explore this question critically, and extensively, I designed a research study of the writing practices of college students. For the study, I collected argument essays from unit 2 in my course focused on essayist literacies (see [Appendix 1](#)) but situated among assignments that were less traditional and called on multiple literacies—essay reflections, blog posts and responses, portfolios and portfolio reflections—from fourteen student research participants. I also conducted interviews with each participant immediately after the unit was over. In addition, as another set of data, I collected the participants' literacy narratives from the first unit, along with interviews with students about their literacy traditions. Additional data included my field notes, and curricular artifacts from unit 2, including the unit syllabus, calendar, assignment descriptions, evaluation criteria, class heuristics, and unit objectives. I examined this data in

light of relevant theoretical insights from scholarship in essayist literacy and other closely connected fields—intercultural communication, World Englishes, rhetoric and composition, and new media.

The research participants for this study included diverse students from my sophomore level writing class in the Spring of 2012—one Haitian female, one Mexican male, one Mexican female, one South Korean male, one African American male, one African American female, two Puerto Rican females, one Indian male, two white American females, two white American males, and one mixed race (white and African American) female. My course for this particular class was framed around the idea of multiple literacies, or multiliteracies (New London Group, Schwartz, Lynch and Wysocki) for diverse students in this age of globalization and technologies. Inspired by Michele Anstey and Geoff Bull's argument that "Globalization provides a contextual necessity for us to become multiliterate" (175), my course took up multiliteracies in its broader frame, with multiliteracies not only encompassing the notion of plural literacies—such as visual, cyber, academic, critical, digital, new media, and intercultural, among other kinds of literacies (Kalantzis and Cope; New London Group; Anstey and Bull; Hawisher and Selfe; Selber)—but also entailing the ability to interact using multiple Englishes in English speaking contexts and multiple writing/communication styles across cultures and disciplines. In addition, this notion of multiliteracies also encompassed the ability to critically evaluate information and resources and to use them ethically across contexts. In my course, multiliteracies, therefore, meant a repertoire of creative, critical, reflective and rhetorical skills that students need to successfully navigate the complexities of the globalized world. With regards to essayist literacy, in particular, the notion of multiliteracies spoke to students' acquisition of skills and ability to choose, practice, and negotiate different forms and levels of essayist literacy as the writing context or occasion calls for them. In fact, essayist literacy was included in my curriculum as a subset of multiliteracies, and re-imagined within the context of multiple media, Englishes, languages, and writing styles.

Through triangulation and rhetorical analysis of all the data sources, I found a complex negotiation happening in the students' process of essay writing, from topic selection, to location and evaluation of sources, to adoption of a particular essay form or style. I also discovered similar negotiation in place with regards to students' past and present linguistic, cultural and literacy traditions, and their personal and academic 'selves.' Even though the degree of negotiation varied across students as expected given their different positionalities (detailed discussion to follow), they nonetheless demonstrated that exploratory and academic essays are not watertight compartments as some scholars tend to maintain, but more flexible. The findings from this study also challenged my assumptions about diverse students' linguistic and stylistic negotiations during the composing process in English for academic audiences. Based on my prior readings of scholarship in rhetoric and composition, applied linguistics, and literacy studies (Canagarajah; Young; Lu; Pennycook; Horner, Trimbur and Royster; New London Group), my assumption going into this research was that if provided with an appropriate assignment, instruction, and resources, international multilingual students would negotiate multiple languages, writing styles, essay forms and literacy traditions much more actively and effectively than domestic American students. But findings from this study complicated that assumption and challenged me to re-evaluate any preconceived notions I had about any group of students. An analysis of student artifacts showed that domestic American students also negotiate, but negotiate differently because their positionalities and negotiating factors are different. Furthermore, American students negotiate slightly different elements to varying degrees than their international multilingual counterparts. As the case studies analyzed below also demonstrate, domestic American students do not negotiate linguistic or cultural differences as complexly as international students while writing in English for American institutions; they nevertheless negotiate, for example, formal and informal tones, personal and academic 'selves,' and thesis driven and exploratory essay forms if their composing and research processes are supported with relevant resources and instruction. Thus, on the one hand, this study challenged my assumption about the composing process of some groups of students; on the other, it also demonstrated the effectiveness of my pedagogical strategy that students in globalized classrooms (Khadka) should be taught to negotiate a number of factors, such as linguistic, cultural, and stylistic differences, and binaries in essay forms (such as exploratory/thesis-driven, inductive/deductive, alphabetic/multimodal etc.), encouraging them to retain the foundational values of essay, such as 'personal,' 'exploratory' and 'situated,' while being rhetorically persuasive to their intended audiences, including the academic ones. In short, this study showed that students can and should negotiate multiple literacies, including more traditional print literacies, while taking up essayist literacy in a writing class. The findings from this study suggest that we can productively foreground negotiation, or shuttling (Canagarajah, Toward) on multiple fronts of language, culture, dialect, style, and media, as the major goal while teaching essayist literacy in a diverse 21st century writing classroom.

In this study, I made triangulation the central part of analysis because it is highly valued in qualitative research for its function of cross-verifying interpretations and research findings with additional testimonials. For triangulation, I used multiple sets of data—student texts, interviews, field notes, curricular artifacts, and relevant insights from multiple interconnected fields of study—intercultural communication, World Englishes, new media, globalization, and rhetoric and composition, which also served as analytical frameworks for my study. Another factor I accounted

for in this study is participants' positionalities in light of the prevailing research theories that a writer's position in a context (essay writing context, for instance) is shaped by his or her gender, class, race, culture, language, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, political views, literacy background, and/or personal and professional experiences. Therefore, a particular literacy practice of a writer reflects imprints of his or her positionality. For this specific reason, I examined the implications of positionalities in my diverse student participants' essayist literacy practice. I collected the details on their positionalities by asking them to compose extended literacy narratives and by conducting follow-up interviews with additional questions around their literate lives in the past and present. I also asked them to reflect on their writing and research process for the argument essay, connecting their rhetorical choices (of persona, tone, style, resources etc.) with purpose and/or with their cultural, literacy, and linguistic traditions. I used all these data in conjunction with other sets of data collected through multiple research methods for the purpose of triangulation, and for analyzing participants' research and writing process in this particular assignment. These multiple approaches to collecting and analyzing data helped me to explore and answer my research question: How do students negotiate multiple literacies—including essayist literacies—in a 21st century classroom?

Curricular Design

Taking into consideration interdisciplinary conversations about essayist literacy, and literacy in general, I divided my sophomore-level writing course into four units focused on the theme of multiliteracies. I took up multiliteracies as a topic for the course because it was broad enough to let students choose something they were interested in or wanted to explore further. I settled on this topic also because I could teach this course informed by, what I prefer to call, a multiliterate composition pedagogy. Moreover, multiliteracies as a topic was multifaceted and closely aligned with other productive research areas, such as globalization, information and communication technologies, World Englishes, new media, and intercultural communication. In order to familiarize students with the concept of multiliteracies, I had a small set of articles, and videos in my calendar. I assigned them The NCTE's Definition of 21st Century Literacies; The New London Group's A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures; Howard Gardner's *The Washington Post* article: The End of Literacy? Don't Stop Reading; Victoria Department of Education's Video Series: 1. Considering Multiliteracies and 2. Exploring Multiliteracies; and two YouTube videos: A Vision of Students Today (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGCJ46vyR9o>) and Multimedia and Multi-literacies in the Composition Classroom (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4zSDOQ9mVY>).

The first unit (See [Appendix 2](#) for assignment details) in my course was dedicated to learning from students about their literacy traditions (literacy narrative assignment) and teaching/practicing critical and visual literacies (rhetorical analysis of a digital artifact project), whereas the third unit was meant to introduce students to the notion of remediation (Bolter and Grusin) with some hands-on training with "repurposing" media (See [Appendix 3](#) for details on remediation project). Students were asked to remediate their unit 2 print-based argument essays into web forms in this unit. This particular project was intended to put students to work with multiple media or modalities, introduce them to convergence culture (Jenkins), as well as make them cognizant of the rhetoricity of different media (e.g. website vs. print), or the dynamics of intercultural/interracial communication. Unit four, on the other hand, was dedicated to documentary production (See [Appendix 4](#) for details on collaborative documentary film-making project), in which students collaborated in groups of three to produce a movie on a controversial contemporary topic like Occupy Wall Street, the Trayvon Martin (shooting) case, or the Democratic Movement in the Middle East.

While units 1, 3, and 4 were fruitful and interesting for students and me, the unit given relatively more time and space in the curriculum was the 5-week-long unit 2. This unit was given due importance in recognition of the value of essayist literacy in students' academic and professional lives, and for its key place in course structure and the assignment sequence. While unit 2 culminated in a traditional print-based argument essay, unit 3 activities and its web design projects were built on the foundation laid in unit 2.

While designing unit 2 based on essayist literacy in particular and the course itself in general, I had to negotiate a number of things—my research agenda/s, my program requirements/course learning objectives, current scholarship in essayist literacy and multiliteracies, and my own evolving sense of composition curriculum for a diverse classroom. For instance, I was flexible in source requirements for the essay even though one of the designated outcomes for the course specifically states that the course is geared toward teaching students to use "library resources" and some methods of primary data collection. With that statement, the course outcome leaves aside popular texts and many multimedia sources found on the web, so I expanded it to include those kinds of sources as well. This demonstrated that sources, in this age of multimedia, are available in digital mediums as much as they are in print mediums; that information is available in popular sources as much as they are in scholarly sources; that each medium (such as image, text, and sound) has its own unique affordances, and

mediums work more productively in combination than in isolation; that compositions, even essays, now are increasingly multimodal and/or multimedia; and that information abundance is both a boon and bane at the same time. In order to ensure that students actually get acquainted with and use both scholarly and popular sources in different formats, I specified the potential types and number of sources to be used in the essay, and also provided them with the description of the evaluation process for locating and selecting credible and relevant sources.

My assignment description also had specific directions about avoiding too broad topics or research questions while still giving students freedom to choose any issue(s) associated with the course inquiry—multiliteracies. Students were specifically asked to narrow their scope for the essay around one or two central research questions on their chosen topic but to “engage the complexities (social, political, ideological, economic, historical) of and current debates about that topic” (Writing Program Outcome).

Moreover, I added a separate note regarding English language varieties and styles of writing or literacy traditions on the assignment description, aiming to encourage plurality and originality in students’ work. This particular note on language and style was intended to make students aware of the fact that communities across the world compose texts in different styles; they do speak different languages, even if only different varieties of the same language. Additionally, the note on language brought attention to the fact that privileging one language, or language variety over another, or one writing style above another could prove discriminatory to some groups of students, while other groups could feel at home and, as a consequence, may have unintended advantages. Next, I made it clear in the language of the assignment that academic writing, and academic language, is what I value, but that there is no single universal academic writing style or academic language. With that note on World Englishes and plurality of academic writing styles around the world, I negotiated the notion of academic writing articulated in the designated course outcomes while complicating the traditional notion of essayist literacy in the context of globalization and increasing cross-cultural and cross-linguistic interactions. Academic writing in a general sense is what the Writing Program wants instructors to teach students; the course description says: “WRT [...] focuses on the rhetorical strategies, practices, and conventions of critical academic researched writing,” which implies plurality of academic writing with the term “conventions,” but neither the course description nor the learning outcomes speak specifically about the form of the essay or the type of sources, or the writing style, or the language variety to be used or adopted in the class.

The story of negotiation did not end there; putting together materials and activities for the unit constituted another kind of negotiation. On the one hand, there is no denying that a course driven by multiliteracies as an inquiry should reflect ‘multi’ in its course materials and artifacts too, which means the course materials should ideally be an assemblage of texts in multiple media, multiple modalities, and multiple forms; on the other hand, this particular unit was dedicated to essayist literacy, which in a traditional sense is print-based literacy. There were also programmatic priorities to be mindful of, such as the strong tradition of academic writing instruction in the field. Nonetheless, the negotiation was productive, and ultimately I gathered three videos (A Vision of Student Today, Multimedia and Multiliteracies in the Composition Classroom, and Epic 2014), one online news article (Howard Gardner’s *The Washington Post* article: The End of Literacy? Don’t Stop Reading), one website (Victoria Department of Education’s multiliteracies web page), three print texts, (Making an Effective Argument, a chapter from Jack Selzer and Lester Faigley’s *Handbook, Good Reasons*; Yamuna Kachru’s book chapter, Speaking and Writing in World Englishes from *The Handbook of World Englishes*; and Sheila J. Ramsey’s journal article, Interactions between North Americans and Japanese: Considerations of Communication Style), a set of handouts on different aspects of writing and research (such as narrowing the research focus; locating and evaluating print and Internet sources; textual, visual and multimodal analysis and argumentation; drafting a research proposal; evolving thesis; claim making and synthesizing sources; annotated bibliography; composing, revising and editing process; codemeshing and translanguaging; methods of data collection and analysis; stylistic and linguistic plurality/diversity; dialoguing with sources; and documenting sources), and some sample documents as unit texts. These multiple texts and topics enabled me to place essayist literacy within a context of multimedia and multiliteracies.

Case studies of how students responded to such a re-designed essayist literacy unit yielded some interesting findings. I will present some of them here.

Case Studies: Sophia and Andre

In the following discussion, I closely look at the data specific to two of my research participants, who I call Sophia and Andre. My analysis is specifically focused on the kinds and degrees of negotiations these participants engaged in their writing and research processes within the context of essayist literacies. I particularly examine the moments and instances of negotiation in action with respect to their choice of topics, languages and/or English

varieties, their decision on “personas” and writing styles, and their determination of sources and forms for their respective essays. For instance, I analyze how these participants explored and narrowed topics for their research; how they evaluated and selected sources for their essays; how they settled on writing styles including the use of tone, diction, languages and/or English varieties; and how they decided on the form/s for their essays. The analysis organized this way helps to make sense of multiple sets of data and also to examine in detail how or whether students engaged essayist literacy in its expanded sense. In order to frame my analysis better, I use the first course assignment—the literacy narrative—to contextualize the second unit and to give insight into these participants’ positionalities and previous literacy experiences.

Sophia

Sophia is a Hispanic female student from Puerto Rico. Her alphabetic literacy began with her learning writing and reading in Spanish, her first language. From first grade on, she also started taking English and Math classes. Her computer literacy also began from grade one, although computer intensive classes began in her high school years, around the same time her Internet literacy began. Her literacy narrative details her preliminary literacy education as follows:

The first language I started using for writing was Spanish, a year after I also started writing in English. I began reading in English and Spanish when I was about five or six years old, yet I have always made use of the English language when it comes to working on a computer. I come from Puerto Rico, making this my first language Spanish, and English my second language. I learned to speak English because my mother and grandmother would always play Disney sing along videos and movies for me, and the books they bought me were usually in English, so that I was able to learn it more quickly and have a better core or base in this language than what was taught in school.
(literacy narrative)

In Sophia’s digital literacy learning experience, the hegemony of English is evident; she reports that she has always used English in digital activities even though Spanish is her first language. As an English-as-a-second-language speaker, she confesses that she struggles to switch between her first and second language while writing in English: “Having to switch languages back and forth also makes my writing experience confusing and limited, if I happen to not know how to write something in specific or the way I think of it in Spanish is not ‘the correct way’ to write it in English” (literacy narrative).

Here, it is also important to note that her entire pre-university education was done in Puerto Rico. In her argument essay for unit 2, Sophia discusses the language policy debate in Puerto Rico in some length, exploring the larger cultural and historical issues associated with this high-stakes topic, and presenting her position on the debate. Initially, she had planned to talk about the English language policy in Latin American and Caribbean countries, but later narrowed her focus to the language policy in Puerto Rico. She discusses her narrowing process in her reflection essay:

I had the curiosity of learning about how the English language is presented and taught in Latin America and the Caribbean, but this topic resulted to be too broad and I was not able to find many good articles or specific books on the topic since these countries have a wide range in culture, and laws and policies on language. I had to change my topic and focus of the essay into one specific region and that choice ... was the English language in Puerto Rico.

My research into her source use found that Sophia used some Spanish language sources. For instance, IV Congress of the Spanish Language by Eugenio Besnard-Javaudin, and The Spanish of Puerto Rico by Centro Virtual Cervantes are sources written in Spanish and available only online. Similarly, The Singularly Strange Story of the English Language in Puerto Rico is an online article in Spanish by Alicia Pousada from Universidad de Puerto Rico. Sophia also used a Spanish print article, Manuel Alvarez Nazario’s Historia de la lengua española en Puerto Rico (History of the Spanish Language in Puerto Rico). Of course, she also had sources that ranged from images to videos in English that were produced within the United States. In that sense, there is diversity in her source use, and her sources come from scholars and publication forums (both print and web) from across borders. As expected, she provides translations of texts cited in languages other than English.

Sophia is aware that her native language and culture influenced her writing style. She says: “because my main language is Spanish ... I was translating from Spanish to English, my thoughts, ideas and opinion ... I would read books in Spanish and would translate them” (interview). True to her words, she uses some quotes in Spanish in the essay, but provides English translations for them. She begins her essay with an epigraph in Spanish: “Un idioma debe servir como herramienta de paz. Nunca para oprimir. Siempre para liberar. –Ivelisse Rivera”, which

she translates as: “A language should serve as a tool for peace. Never for oppression. Always for freedom.” Since she is more proficient in Spanish than in English, she says that she has to “switch languages back and forth,” which makes her “writing experience confusing and limited” (literacy narrative). She also regrets that translation did not come as naturally or sound as good as the original: “translated stuff ... does not sound like an English” (interview).

This confusion and translingual challenge is reflected in her style. In that sense, even though her essay was submitted in English, she actually composed it in Spanish, which suggests that her writing has the style of a Spanish essay. Structurally, Sophia says, Spanish and English essays are different, and she was taught to compose them differently: “Spanish essays begin with an introduction, and they really do not talk much about thesis statement” (interview). Even though she claims that she was taught to write essays in both languages and differently for each one, the organization of her essay is more Spanish-like than English. For instance, at the beginning of her essay she had a long section that traced the historical accounts of language policy in Puerto Rico: “I provide a summarized history of Puerto Rico since the Spanish colonial times until the colonization of the United States and how these various establishments have affected the people of Puerto Rico” (from her essay). Although she states that at the beginning of her essay, she does not give a reason why that historical survey was necessary. Only after that long section follows her thesis, which she reinforces time and again in the essay except for in the conclusion. Instead of reinforcing or circling back to her claim, she ends her essay with a call to language teachers of Puerto Rico: “Teachers have to work with motivating students to appreciate the Spanish language more and learn it with passion as part of their culture, and also encourage them and teach that it is also important to learn English, and many other languages to expand their knowledge and become better intellectual human beings” (from her essay). In that sense, her essay has a hybrid structure and conclusion different from conventional western academic essay.

Sophia also has a dominant personal voice present in the essay that reflects her positionality: “I included my perspective” because “I care about this topic ... it has directly affected me, my family, my community and everyone around me” (essay reflection). Her strong personal presence in the essay has to do with her personal investment in the topic: “I personally support the idea of learning another language to expand our horizons, yet it should not be done by force, but because the people actually have an interest and a need to be more intellectual in terms of learning the language” (essay). She has an engaged voice in that she directly addresses her audience, for instance, in this excerpt from her essay: “I think that language creates and helps shape the culture of a country or region. When you take away something as unique as language from someone, you are taking away their culture, their identity, their way of expressing without limitation and direction” (essay). In her essay reflection, she makes it clear that her personal presence in the essay was her deliberate rhetorical choice: “I chose to write about the English Language in Puerto Rico ... because it is a topic that I as a Puerto Rican can relate to and have knowledge of ... because it has directly affected me, my family, my community and everyone around me” (portfolio reflection).

Sophia's composing process is notable for a number of reasons. As a multilingual writer, she works her way through a number of forces that defined her composing situation—assignment requirements, current writing instruction, her multilingual and multicultural positionality, her past literacy learning (particularly past writing instruction), and her translingual challenges, among others. For instance, she uses an epigraph from a Spanish text and also cites a number of sources produced by Spanish-speaking authors outside the United States. Her practice is ideal from a point of view of integrating multiple sources; it nonetheless raises a number of questions about translation and its complexity—how close to originals are her translations or the translated versions of originals she cites? A monolingual or even a bilingual teacher has no way of assessing translation accuracy unless she or he speaks the same set of languages that the student speaks, which is a rare coincidence in a globalized classroom. Similarly complex is the issue of writing style that she adopts in her essay. She notes that she is aware of the differences in organizational patterns of typical English essays and Spanish essays, yet her essay organization does not reflect her adherence to an English essay writing style. Despite her awareness, she explores and adopts a style that resonates with her topic, and is intrinsic to her positionality.

My goal in this unit/assignment was to encourage students to negotiate writing styles, languages, and media for particular audiences and situations. Sophia's essay is testimony to the fact that she negotiated a number of factors while composing this text for American academic audience, and her essay form departs from a traditional thesis-driven academic essay form. Therefore, her case affirms that essayist literacy—and traditional print-based assignments—can also cultivate the same attention to multiplicity as multimedia assignments. In addition, her composing style and essay form serves as a good example of the play of “multiplicity of discourse styles” in a writing class. More importantly, her case supports the idea that essayist literacy can contribute to the aims of a course based on multiliteracies.

Andre

Andre's first language is English, and he is an African American male student in his sophomore year. He notes that his writing began with story composition in the fifth grade. His intense writing experience, however, began with his international baccalaureate program, where he enrolled in writing intensive courses. Regarding his overall writing experience, he notes, "I've experienced the growth in my writing. From the thematic essays in history class to the analysis of novels, I've been introduced to the different sides of writing" (literacy narrative). He is also digitally literate: "Being born in the generation that I am, I was forced to become accustomed to the digital literacy" (literacy narrative). He began his digital literacy with typing and video games but later worked up to the complex tasks of assembling and disassembling the hardwares of desktop computers. He also learned to work with the Internet soon after. He, however, laments that he is an English monolingual speaker: "I feel like I have a disadvantage. So many people come from different places, and they have two languages or more. Most of my friends speak other languages. Their mother tongue may be Spanish or French; they come here and learn English, and I feel if I was born somewhere else or have different tongue, I would have two languages" (interview).

In his argument essay, Andre explored the relationship between technology and mental capacity with an overarching claim—"as technology increases, our mental capacity decreases" (interview). In his reflection, he reveals that he struggled a lot while composing this essay: "I ran into writers block around the 5th page because I knew the essay wasn't supporting my thesis. Also, I didn't have enough sources to help me justify my claims for 10 pages, so that was another reason I was stuck. But once I change my thesis for the better, I was able to find sources for my argument and the oppositions" (essay reflection). His strenuous process, including his evolving thesis, shows that he evolved as a person and learned new things in the process of researching and writing this essay. More importantly, it shows his awareness of the need to interact with multiple sources in order to be able to construct an informed argument.

Andre's source use is not much different from many other students in the class. He used print sources, such as Plato's *Phaedrus* and Ziming Liu's *Reading Behavior in the Digital Environment: Changes in Reading Behavior Over the Past Ten Years*, and multimedia sources including some YouTube videos, Rachel Dretzin's documentary *Digital Nation*, and some videos on multiliteracies taken from Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis' New Learning website. However, when it comes to his writing style, Andre reports that he consciously chose to represent himself, and his topic, in a particular fashion based on his positionality:

[F]or writing style, I had to think about how I wanted the tone of the essay to sound, because in unit 1 it was very communicative/funny and it was like to get the audience to laugh a little bit and this is a research paper, I want it to be stern, I want it to be like this is my voice and this is what I am saying, you guys should believe this, but also at the same time I did not want to scare the reader away. I want the people to have the comedic side: a couple jokes, metaphors so that people could actually have fun reading so I combined more of humorous side to what's really stern and what an academic paper is all about. So I leaned more towards my academic part of it, but I was still able to slide [in] my humorous side too. (interview)

From this excerpt, it becomes apparent that he deliberately chose two different approaches for the two different unit assignments of the same course. This also shows that he is mindful of the academic writing situation where a serious approach to a chosen topic is expected. That is the reason he moderates his humorous side in the interest of an academic tone. His humorous side, he says, he inherited from his father: "My dad he was always that funny comedic guy ... always tells jokes and never stops. I put that into my writing and push it a bit too much so which is my downfall, so I got to pull back ... because I am serious but my tone could come out as not serious because of the comedy in the paper" (interview). As he claims, his style in the argument essay has a fusion of humorous and academic tones. Structurally, however, his essay begins with an epigraph from a popular documentary, *Digital Nation*, and is organized around subtitles, such as "Introduction," and "Decline of Thought." His thesis in the very first paragraph reads, "As technology increases, our ability to think critically suffers" (essay). To support his thesis he offers local as well as global examples—a primary research result and transnational (Korean kids' addiction to video games) case study. Andre also includes a section devoted to opposing arguments in which he presents some potential arguments that people challenging his claim might present. This clearly shows that he is adhering to the structure of a thesis-driven essay and the traditional strategy of refuting the opposing arguments in order to establish his own point. In that sense, his essay is well organized. Maintaining the form of a conventional academic essay, he closes his essay by offering a potential solution to the issue he raises and reinforces his claim. Additionally, throughout the essay, his tone is mostly neutral, detached and formal, yet is blended well with his 'humorous side.' In fact, the only instance where his personal side was brought into the essay was when he mentioned his own writing class to further his argument that technology should complement the human brain, but not rule over it: "The style of teaching is changing. For example in my Writing class at [...] University, students are

requested to blog about readings that are done outside of class" (essay). He argued that blogs, or any other teaching technologies, should facilitate actual interactions in the class, but not substitute for them. Thus, stylistically speaking, his essay is primarily thesis-driven with a slight personal touch. This is significant because he is able to negotiate multiple discourse styles (personal humor with objective academic style, for instance) for a specific rhetorical purpose despite the fact that he is a monolingual writer trained to write in a specific way, and also despite the fact that he is writing a traditional print-based essay. His case demonstrates a more complex view of essayist literacy in practice.

In addition, Andre's is an interesting example of an essay being a catalyst for the pursuit of knowledge, and its form a carefully crafted style of presenting ideas. As he mentions in his literacy narrative, essay and portfolio reflections, and interview with me, his essay writing has been a journey of exploration about a number of interrelated issues pertaining to his topic. His evolving thesis that he describes when talking about his writer's block speaks to the fact that his essaying was tantamount to learning and discovery. His essay form is thesis-driven—something expected of a domestic American student schooled in American academic system all his life, but, in his case, it is something carefully chosen to fit the academic audience. Another interesting thing about his style is that, even within a traditional thesis-driven form, he could incorporate his 'humorous side' and some personal reflections, which corroborates the idea that the academic essay is not necessarily a stilted form. Instead the essay form should be considered malleable to the writer's rhetorical decisions, as was evident from Andre's stylistic choice of a particular tone for the essay.

Conclusion and Implications

These two case studies are not representative of all fourteen research participants in my larger study, let alone of all domestic and international students in American higher education. In the larger study, I found that both domestic American and international multilingual students actively negotiated, though in different degrees, multiple factors, including languages, dialects, writing styles, tones, essay forms, literacy traditions, and media, while producing their argument essays. While the particular positionalities of these participants informed the nature and degree of negotiation in the composing process, this study suggested that foregrounding negotiation of multiple literacies in a writing course or a writing assignment can encourage students' learning and practice of "multiplicity of discourse styles" in a writing class.

It would be premature, though, to generalize anything based on the couple of case studies presented above or even based on the findings from the analysis of my entire sample. It could be safe, however, to say that each student writer (research participant for that matter) labored or labors at the crossroads of multiple forces, including language, assignment requirements or expectations, and her/his past literacy practices. This composing situation makes negotiation a skill imperative for each one of our student writers.

Another aspect this study highlights is that writing teachers play an important role in student writers' learning and practice of "multiplicity of discourse styles," and skill of negotiation. However, supporting the growth of this ability in students involves redesigning both the curricular and pedagogical artifacts we use in or for the class. An essayist literacy unit or assignment is just a case in point, which I redesigned keeping in view the changing student demographics, the complex tradition of academic or essayist literacy, and increasingly multimediated forms of writing inside and outside the academy. This curricular and pedagogical experiment was driven by my conviction that we can no longer overlook the linguistic and cultural diversity in our classrooms, nor can we ignore the increasing global interactions of people and ideas, and the unprecedented influence of media and technology in our and our students' literacy practices. In fact, it could be counterproductive for our students, rhetoric and composition as a discipline, and for American academic institutions for us to promote and enforce only the western essayist textual form in our classrooms, for doing so would be tantamount to imposing a norm from one particular culture or context on to the other. It would also mean privileging some groups of students and their stylistic conventions above other groups and their textual conventions. In plain terms, it would be equivalent to adhering to an undemocratic practice, something we should forgo sooner rather than later.

Relinquishing this practice would involve expanding the boundaries of the course, unit, or assignment on essayist literacy in order to create spaces for multiple languages, multiple media, literacy conventions, and subjectivities or positionalities of the essayists. However, expanding the boundaries should not be understood to mean the sacrifice of basic reading and writing skills in composition classes. Expansion should always be an 'addition to,' not a 'subtraction from,' what we have been doing in our classes. For instance, students in my class did most of the things students in any traditional writing class would do: critical summary, paraphrasing, critical responses to unit readings and texts, critical source evaluation, synthesis of multiple sources, textual and visual analysis, annotated bibliography, proposal writing, claim-making, evolving thesis, and so on. But they also obtained crucial

insights that their positionalities and literacy backgrounds have, or can have, bearing on their literacy practices. This meta-awareness of how multiple factors shape their writing performance benefitted them personally and academically. They could see that their positionalities and past literacy practices could serve as a reservoir of resources to turn to as and when needed to make their communicative acts, essays for that matter, rhetorically effective. They also gained the insight that depending on the writing context they might find themselves in, they should even be able to suppress their positionalities and past literacy habits in order to write in a style and convention of a particular genre in a particular composing situation.

Therefore, it is imperative that a course, or unit, on essayist literacy has components of multiple essay forms, multiple writing styles, multiple modes and mediums of writing, and multiple presentation patterns incorporated into it. These components contribute to the development of the shuttling ability—the idea that students should be able to move back and forth between differing essay forms, discourse styles, writing modes, and/or organization patterns, as the writing situation demands. They should even be able to negotiate those forms or styles towards their rhetorical end—effective and persuasive arguments and claims on the topic at hand. Given the value of shuttling ability in the globalized world (and classroom), I foregrounded it even in another assignment in the sequence—the remediation project. The remediation project was an extension to the argument essay assignment, where students repurposed their print-based essays for different media and different target audience. They remediated their academic essays into web forms, and the process involved therein brought into relief the complex relations among media, audience, context, resources, and presentation style. Working on this project, students particularly understood how their rhetorical and stylistic choices are shaped by the consideration of audience, and medium of delivery. Building further on this thread, the final assignment—the collaborative documentary project—provided students with an additional opportunity to reflect on and respond to a different composing situation, where a shuttling ability of slightly different sort was called into service.

Therefore, it would be in the best interest of cultivating negotiation or shuttling skill in students to expand the breadth of course materials by situating essayist literacies within the context of multiple media and modalities, multiple languages, and multiple literacy traditions. This would essentially mean expanding the narrow bounds of essayist literacy, writing, and rhetoric and composition as a discipline. In addition, this would mean adopting a global outlook to writing by incorporating into our curriculum, among other things, how writing is done and taught around the world and how its practice is shifting with the change in writing technologies (Khadka). In broader terms, it all would mean the co-evolution of writing curriculum with multiple technologies, multimedia, and multiple literacy practices around the world. This would also entail larger shifts in the mission of composition classes, discipline of rhetoric and composition, and of American higher education. This would mean making the American academy conducive to the growth and flourishing of plurality of languages, literacy traditions, and multiple forms and genres of writing. Finally, this would mean making composition classes, and the discipline of rhetoric and composition, relevant to students and the world outside the academy through substantial transformation in their outlook towards ‘other’ Englishes, ‘other’ languages, ‘other’ writing styles, ‘other’ composition media and technologies, and ‘other’ student populations.

Appendices

1. [Appendix 1: Unit 2 Essayist Literacy Assignments](#)
2. [Appendix 2: Unit 1 Literacy Narrative, and Rhetorical Analysis Assignments](#)
3. [Appendix 3: Unit 3 Remediation Assignments](#)
4. [Appendix 4: Unit 4 Documentary Production Assignments](#)

Appendix 1: Unit 2 Essayist Literacy Assignments

A. 10-12 Pages of Argument Essay on Course Inquiry

You will investigate an issue, debate, problem, controversy or a question about multiliteracies in relation to other attendant issues, such as globalization, information and communication technologies, World Englishes, new media or intercultural communication in some length and depth. You are required to use primary and secondary, scholarly and popular, and print and digital (online) sources in your essay. When you research and develop your argument, you do a number of things simultaneously: extend a conversation, historicize, make a new claim, complicate an existing claim or established fact, find a gap in the studies done, and propose a solution or offer an alternative perspective. As a college-level student writer, you also make moves that academics make in their essays: state your thesis or theses at some points in the essay, make general or specific claims, and furnish evidences for the claims made. I am aware that it is almost impossible to come up with some grand universal

claims or some irrefutable thesis or set of theses in a paper of this length, but you can and have to attempt to present a tentative claim or set of claims in this paper corroborated by the data or sources you retrieve through different research methods. Even though it is an academic essay and you might have been schooled to avoid personal in your academic essays, I am open to you implicating yourself in the essay i.e. using “I” or bringing in relevant personal narratives or experiences from your life. In other words, your essay should ideally be a combination of personal and academic, experiential and empirical, and facts and narratives.

A Note about English Varieties and Styles of Writing

As a writing teacher, I am aware that while requiring you to compose academic essay in academic English, I should not privilege one variety of English or one particular literacy tradition over other English varieties or literacy traditions (or writing styles). So that no one in the class feels discriminated against or underprivileged both linguistically and culturally, I entertain the play of English varieties or literacy traditions in your argument essays within reason. No doubt, I want you to compose your essay in academic language, the language that other scholars in the academy use, but I am also cognizant of the fact that there is no single universal academic language across disciplines or cultures. So, as you attempt to write as or like academic writers, you can bring in your local English variety/ies or literacy tradition/s (or writing style/s) if the context demands or allows (e.g. while citing the local sources or authors, while remixing your original writing style with the academic writing style or while offering examples of local/different argumentation pattern or information presentation style). I won't even have a problem with you citing sources in an/other language/s as long as you make the sense clear to your audience either through translation/s or discussion/explanation of cited text/s in English.

B. Reflection Paper

In this paper, you reflect on a number of choices you make during the selection of the topic for your research, while conducting actual research on your chosen topic, while composing the essay, and while revising the essay for or before final submission. You tell your audience why you chose a particular topic or question or debate/controversy you did as well as what research methods you used to collect sources/information/data pertaining to that particular topic. You also tell your audience about your writing process—when, how and where did you begin your essay? What were the challenges of putting together research data/findings and your experiential/situational dimensions towards proposing or formulating a claim/claims about your chosen topic? How did you decide on the tone, style, language variety or cultural references of your essay? How much time did you spend on composing or revising the draft? Why did you revise if you did? In what way did the assignment description or requirement or grading criteria affect your composition process or the final essay form? What is your overall experience of working on this particular assignment?

C. Portfolio

Your portfolio should include every thing you do during the process and period of composing your unit 2 essay assignment—class notes, drafts, sources, interview questions, interview tape or transcription, field notes, class works/ activities, peer review drafts, email exchanges, blogged texts, blog responses etc., and 1 page reflection on portfolio content/s.

Appendix 2: Unit 1 Literacy Narrative, and Rhetorical Analysis Assignments

A. Alphabetic and Digital Literacy Narratives: 1000 words

Literacy narrative is composing a story about reading and composing in print and/or digital media.

Step 1: Alphabetic Literacy Narrative

Compose your literacy narrative in alphabets—using letters and words. Consider the following questions as you compose:

When and how did you learn to read or compose texts on papers and (or) screens? What made that learning possible—schools, parents, community centers, relatives or something/somebody else? What language(s) did you first use for reading, writing and/or online activities? Is English your first language? When and how did you learn to speak, read and write in English? What about computers and the Internet? When and where did you first encounter them? What did you begin with? What were the programs/applications you began your digital or cyber

literacy with?

Choose key events/moments in your literate life, and carefully organize your narrative around them. You might want to consider these questions as you compose: Where did you stand in relation to alphabetic literacy or digital literacy and where are you now? If you speak more than one language, you can write your story in the first language and then in the second language and reflect on the difference in the story itself because of the language. You can also talk about literacy in the first language and the second language and the degree of proficiency in each of them. You can also shed light on the cultural or linguistic differences and literate practices or talk about digital divide and literacy learning (for example, English as the default language in computers or access to the Internet or computer programs and digital literacy etc.) if that speaks to your situation.

Step 2: Digital Literacy Narrative

Video or audio record the narrative. Camera on your computer or your phone should be fine. If you don't have access to camera, talk to me.

Step 3: Upload the recorded narrative to a computer.

Step 4: Submit me both the narratives in a CD and/or via email.

B. Rhetorical Analysis Assignment

This assignment asks you to compose a 3-4 page of rhetorical analysis of a media artifact (a music video, digital or video advertisement, movie or animation clip/s etc.) of your choosing. The text for analysis should be carefully chosen, and should not be necessarily related to the course inquiry. It should be rich in alphabetic, audio, visual, graphic or spatial resources, or, in other words, it should be good enough for analysis. I encourage you to borrow critical and rhetorical tools from course materials, such as Arthur Berger's book *Media Analysis Techniques*, Jack Selzer and Lester Faigley's *Good Reasons*, and the documentary *Miss Representation*. The first few chapters of Berger's book (Semiotic Analysis, and Psychoanalytic Criticism), and Chapter 5 & 6 of *Good Reasons* are particularly pertinent. You can employ one or all of those approaches or use other productive concepts or insights, such as rhetorical appeals (ethos, logos, pathos), stereotypes, status quo, gender or racial discrimination and/or normalcy while critically analyzing the artifact. We will do some sample rhetorical analyses in the class too, so I want you to keep note of critical and rhetorical terms and concepts discussed in the class and use them in your analysis. Structurally, your analysis should have at least two parts. The first part should describe the text/artifact in specific detail. The description should be vivid and minute to the point of replicating the artifact in words. The second part is the key to the assignment: analysis of the artifact. You might want to pick on symbol, sound, shape, color, images or any other properties of the text and begin the analysis from there. You don't have to say that it is semiotic, Marxist, or feminist analysis, but just do the analysis. Once you are done with the analysis part, you also should make an overall claim about the artifact.

Appendix 3: Unit 3 Remediation Assignments

A. Remediation of Argument Essay in Web Form, Presentation, and Blog Post

Remediation is the incorporation or representation of one medium into another. In their book *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, J. David Bolter and Richard A. Grusin argue that digital or new media are characterized by remediation because they constantly remediate (present in different media) the contents from their predecessors such as television, radio, and print journalism (old media). Remediation, however, is not just an adaptation of the old. Sometimes, new media present old media in entirely new ways without any clue to the old and only people familiar with both know that remediation is taking place. And another significant fact about remediation is that it is not that only new media remediate the old but it works both ways. Television screens and newspaper designs these days look more and more like websites with convergence of multiple media and modes in those platforms. Remediation and media convergence therefore are the major phenomena characterizing the media and composition landscapes in this time of major technological change.

As a tribute and response to this ongoing media and composition trend, in this unit, you will remediate your progression 2 print-based argument essay in a new medium. I encourage you to remediate it in a well-designed web site. The assignment is intended to give you an understanding of relationship among audience, medium, content and style. Upon completing the assignment, you will see, learn and experience how audience and medium shape the content and style of presentation. It is up to you to decide what media assets you want to use for composition and design ranging from videos, songs, audio interviews, images, alphabetic text (from your argument

essay or additional texts), graphics to animations. Only limitation is that all those assets and resources should be rhetorically (effectively) used to represent (remediate) your progression 2 essay, which is to say that you should attempt to present similar argument that you made in your alphabetic argument essay.

B. 3-page Blog Post

Connected with the remediation project, you will also compose and post a 3-page long blog post on your profile in the course site about the rhetorical situation and composition style, audience factor and source and language variety choice, audience and document or web design, and media and composition patterns or forms. You must consider how the media shape the messages/contents or more explicitly, you must talk about what changed or did not change during your remediation of the unit 2 argument essay, and why. In other words, in your blog post you must engage the dynamics of media and message, content and forms, audience and rhetorical choices. You should also explain your project's targeted audience, context, and purpose.

Appendix 4: Unit 4 Documentary Production Assignments

A. Collaborative Documentary Film Project and Presentation

In this unit, you will work collaboratively in a group of 3 and produce 8 to 10 minutes of documentary film. You will choose a movement or event (current or historical) that you find relevant and interesting and that also connects with some aspect of course theme. Some potential topics could be Occupy Wall Street Movement, social media and protest (e.g. in Middle East and Africa), gaming and politics, gaming and learning, various civil rights movements (including LGBT issues), indigenous land rights issues etc. You might want to emulate the documentaries on Steve Jobs and Occupy Wall Street Movement we watch together in the class. Your documentary should incorporate a good amount and variety of sources—alphabetic texts (books, articles, newspaper editorials etc.), audios, videos, still images, among others- and be organically composed. It should also demonstrate your knowledge or learning of a number of techniques such as handling video camera, still camera, incorporating voice over into the film or editing skills. The juxtaposition of different texts and narrative voice and their organic unity will be the key evaluation criteria for your project. Your project should also reflect your understanding of audience, textual cohesion, and ethical treatment of sources etc.

B. 2-page Reflection Paper

In this paper, your group must reflect on each and every choice/decision made during the whole process of documentary production. You might, for instance, talk about the collection or selection of source materials, decision on English variety to be used, narrative voice or work division or other critical dimensions of the process of collaborative research and composition.

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Return to [Composition Forum 32 table of contents](#).

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